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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2008

In Today's Papers

Retired General Detained in Ergenekon Investigation Released
All papers report retired General Eryugur, who suffered a cerebral hemorrhage after falling down stairs at Kandira hospital, was released from prison on Sunday for health reasons. Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet's headline reads "Former General in Coma Released from Prison" and reports that Eryugur was waiting trial in the Ergenekon case and was hospitalized five days ago after he fell down the stairs at Kandira prison. Doctors said Eryugur is still in critical condition, adds the paper. Meanwhile, liberal Radikal reports that four lieutenants and a military student who last week were detained in the Ergenekon investigation have been formerly arrested while lawyer Levent Temiz, artist Nurseli Idiz and transsexual celebrity Seyhan Soylu were set free.

Deniz Feneri Case and Debates in Turkey
Media outlets continue to cover Deniz Feneri Germany case and its potential impact on Turkish politics. Weekend papers predominantly highlighted RTUK Chairman Zahid Akman's connection to the Germany case. Stories in Radikal, Milliyet, Hurriyet, Vatan as well as Taraf argued that there are enough reasons for Akman to announce his resignation. Meanwhile mainstream Milliyet and Hurriyet noted that Mr. Akman is still involved in businesses as either a shareholder or board member, despite restrictions set out in the law for RTUK Chairs's involvement in commercial interests. Monday papers carry a statement from Zahid Akman, sent to media through his lawyer to deny the charges. The statement says, the allegations against Akman are baseless because all of his commercial assets were acquired prior to his assuming the RTUK Chairmanship position. "Moreover there is no regulation mentioned in the RTUK chairman's responsibility banning him from being a shareholder" the statement added.

Papers also highlight Parliament Speaker Toptan's follow up remarks on the RTUK Chairman debate. Toptan said, in many countries resignation due to allegations is an established culture and he wished that Turkey could have the same culture. "Resigning from a duty does not mean accepting allegations" he added.

Editorial Commentary on Deniz Feneri Case

Taha Akyol wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "Respectful British paper The Economist questioned the AKP's purity last week with a headline 'Isn't the AKP pure any longer?' Moreover, regarding PM Erdogan's attacks against the media, an EU Ambassador said "Fasting must have made him a nervous man." If global economic and political centers are becoming suspicious of the AKP, then trust in the capital movements will be affected as well. Therefore, instead of criticizing and threatening the media, PM Erdogan should initiate an investigation against fraud in Turkey as well. If he doesn't hurry up and clean his own garden soon, questions about the AKP's purity will increase."

Mehmet Tezkan wrote in mainstream Vatan: "Deniz Feneri officials committed a crime against humanity by stealing poor people's money. Through their illegal act, they damaged people's charitable feelings and other charity organizations' credibility as well. The social angle of the incident is much stronger than the political results. Therefore, the resignation of Zahid Akman will not be satisfactory. Under these conditions, Akman is obliged to resign. But the case should not end there and Akman, Zekeriya Karaman and their circle should be tried. The prosecutor of the case should be the poor children who lost their aid money to this charity organization."

U.S. Religious Freedom Report

Milliyet, Cumhuriyet and Zaman report on Sunday the annual US State Department report on religious freedom says the Turkish state generally respects religious freedoms, but adds there are restrictions for Islamic and other groups. The symbols of Islam are not allowed in state offices and universities, and the military

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General Staff (TGS) and the National Security Council (MGK) view religious fundamentalism as a threat, according to the report. It criticizes the Turkish government for forcing Alevi children to receive Sunni religious instruction in school. It also criticizes Turkey for not recognizing the Ecumenical status of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, and for keeping the Halki Seminary in Istanbul closed. The report also says Turkey's leading politicians have ties with religious communities, which are outlawed in Turkey.

Suicide Attack against Islamabad Marriott

Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports, "The Bomb Attack in Pakistan Also Killed the Czech Ambassador," and "Ivo Zdarek was only appointed to Islamabad one month ago." Liberal Radikal calls the attack "Like Pakistan's September 11th," and reports, "As Bush's war spreads, the American Marriott Hotel is reduced to rubble in Pakistan," as authorities call it, "the work of Al-Qaeda." Islamist-oriented Zaman carries the headline, "The Prime Minister's Iftar Program Was Cancelled only Hours before the Explosion." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet carries the headline, "The Footprints of Al-Qaeda in the Attack," as "all signs indicate Taliban militants who are on the border with Afghanistan and who are linked to Al-Qaeda are responsible." Leftist Taraf reports, "Pakistan Lives Through Its Own September 11th." Mainstream Sabah reports, "Terrorists Create a 6-meter Crater with 1 Ton of Explosives."

James Jeffrey Begins Confirmation Hearings

Far right Ortadogu reports, "Jim Jeffrey begins his official confirmation hearings this week," and "is being pressured by the American Armenian Assembly (AAA) to refer to the events of 1915 as 'genocide.'" In "Genocide Blackmail Against Bush's Ankara Ambassador," Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports, "the AAA wants Jeffrey to recognize the events as 'genocide,'" while, "Armenian President Serge Sargsyan called for the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border and for diplomatic relations."

TV News:
CNN Turk

Domestic News

- 13 newborn babies died in 11 hours in a research hospital in Izmir.

- PKK terrorists abducted two truck drivers carrying food to military posts in the eastern province of Tunceli.

- On Sunday, around two million candidates took the 'Civil Service Entrance Exam' to be employed in the public sector.

International News

- President Abdullah Gul arrived in New York on Sunday to participate in UN General Assembly meetings to begin Monday.

- Armenian President Serge Sargsyan said his country has no territorial claims on Turkey, and added Yerevan's priority was the opening of the border and the establishment of diplomatic ties with Ankara.

- Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has submitted his resignation to President Shimon Peres.

WILSON